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RECREATION -- IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR!

BY

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ABSTRACT

Family integration is the first step to building relationships. This foundation is essential to the other phases of family development.

RECREATION -- IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

ALL IN THE FAMILY

John is in Pre-School, Jane is in Tot-Time. Mom goes to Jazzercise. Dad plays softball. The kids can play soccer or basketball, and participate in gymnastics and art class. When they get older, there's the Teen Club, more sports, and more activities. The parents have cooking classes, folk dance, stress management classes, and color analysis. Even Spot can go to Dog Obedience School! Wouldn't it be nice if the family could do something together?

"RECREATION -- IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR"

This is the slogan I use when publicizing Family Events that I began to offer through Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District in January, 1985. As a Recreation Supervisor, mother of three (ages 5, 3, and 1) and a wife of one (age 30), I saw a need to offer family recreation activities for today's busy families. Barnum and Bailey never saw anything to match the juggling acts that many people perform today with careers and families. We rush to work, rush to activities, rush to meetings, and rush home to collapse and get ready to start again. It is very demanding from day to day.

While we are planning leisure activities we should always keep in mind that the activities of the family unit are as important as the activities of the individuals who make up that unit. People should be encouraged to do things together as a family--there is always time for

softball, Jazzercise, and Tot-Time.

BUILD UNITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

I began with the commitment that the family deserves opportunities to be together, and that it is our organization's responsibility to provide some of these opportunities. Next, I began listing ideas using this format: one event a month, low cost, appropriate time, accessibility, and an attraction for every type of family. Families benefit from being together--for some, this is attractive enough. Building unity in our community is a one-event-at-a-time process. Here's the final plan that we offer:

January -- PANCAKE BREAKFAST

This event was held in our Community Center Auditorium on a Sunday morning from 9:00 to noon. Our senior citizen's group cooks, serves, and cleans-up. The proceeds go to the Seniors.

February -- VALENTINE DINNER

We marketed this event to our pre-school classes only. The kids made the table decorations and huge valentines to decorate the auditorium. We served flank steak, hot dogs, salad, beans, rolls, Jello salad, and cookies for dessert. The kids sang for their families after dinner. We held this event on a Wednesday night from 6:00-7:30 p.m.

March -- MAGIC SHOW

We made this evening a father and kid(s) activity. We billed it as "Mom's Night Off". Set-up was some games to play after a hot dog and chili dinner and a terrific magician. We served dessert after the magic show. This event took place on a Tuesday night from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

April -- EASTER CARNIVAL/HUNT AND PICNIC

At a central park, with help from the Lion's Club, we run this event on the Saturday before Easter from 10:00-noon. Egg Hunts are for children ages one through six years. There are FREE carnival games for everyone. The high school jazz band plays while families picnic and play games.

May -- COMMUNITY FIESTA RUN AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Most community organizations are represented. They participate through exhibits, food, craft, and game booths. All of this takes place at the local high school. We also set up a portion of the parking lot for a Flea Market. There is a \$10 charge for the space, and the families keep the profits from their sales.

June -- FAMILY TRACK JAMBOREE

This event is held on a Saturday morning from 9:00-noon at the Community

College Track. Track events are held for all ages, as well as some crazy events.

FOURTH OF JULY ACTIVITIES

Held at a local park, we offer a day full of entertainment, good food, and carnival games for the kids as well as the ever popular face painting.

August MINI INDY

This is geared for families of pre-schoolers ages two to five years. We turn the basketball court at the park into a mini race track for their big wheels and tricycles. We register the kids and give them #'s to wear on their backs as well as setting up a pit stop for necessary "repairs" and "gas". Everyone gets a blue ribbon. The whole family enjoys a hot dog lunch after the races.

September -- FAMILY GYM NIGHT

The high school gym is set up with basketball at one end and volleyball at the other end. We put out all kinds of nerf equipment, jump ropes, and balls. The whole family can do activities together and separately. We have two leaders to help the children with games and another leader to get the adults involved. We end with a huge volleyball game with adults and children all participating.

October -- HALLOWEEN PARTY

This alternative to traditional door-to-door trick or treating is held on Halloween night from 6:30-8:00 p.m. The community center auditorium is filled with a variety of Halloween themed games with candy and stickers given as prizes. Kids and adults wear costumes and can have a poloroid picture taken. We end with a tour of the Haunted House that the teen group puts together.

November -- CRAFTS WORKSHOP TO MAKE CHRISTMAS GIFTS

A variety of basic arts and crafts supplies are set-up on long tables with several examples of possible gifts to make. Two leaders help get people started.

December -- CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATING PARTY

We do this event with the whole staff at Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District, and their families. Each family is asked to bring a dessert to share. We make a variety of ornaments, decorate the tree, and sing Christmas carols.

FAMILY TIES

Simple? You know that nothing is simple in this complicated

world--especially when doing special events. Will it work? You bet! You'd be surprised at how responsive families are when given a special reason to be together.

Recipe for REC LEADER'S SURPRISE:

Start with success in mind. Mix in generous amounts of energy, imagination and creativity. Pre-heat by taking care to identify your target groups for publicity. (An event is terrible when half-baked.) Blend until smooth. Serves the needs of families in your community.

Follow this working mother's recipe for Family Events and you will find that RECREATION is indeed A FAMILY AFFAIR!

Well, gotta go . Let's see, go to work, soccer after school, ballet, get to the store